

side, and by a number of other Members, and I would ask our colleagues to call my office today, or Mr. MCHALE's office, to sign up as cosponsors so that we can let this President know that while we disagree with him, he is going to give our troops the support that they need, they deserve and they warrant in terms of the operation in the Bosnian theater.

NATIONAL DEBT CONTINUES TO GROW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. LONGLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LONGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Lisa and Melinda for helping me bring out today's total of the debt. As of 3 o'clock this afternoon, the United States national debt is \$4,988,640,469,699.34. For the second day in a row, it is actually a decrease of \$125 million over yesterday.

Now, to reassure anyone who might think that we have suddenly reversed course in Washington, I want you to know that, unfortunately, that is not the case. In fact, the debt will fluctuate on a daily basis, but overall, during the current fiscal year, we can expect that the Federal debt will probably increase by another \$200 billion. In short, we will pass the \$5 trillion mark at some point in the next 6 or 7 months.

Having said that, again, I rise before this House, Mr. Speaker, to point out the incredible burden that this debt presents, not only to this generation, but to the generation represented by Lisa and Melinda and other generations that will follow us in the future. The \$5 trillion is almost 40 percent of every nickel and dime that the Federal Government will spend over the next 7 years.

Now, one of the reasons that I think it is important that this number be brought to our attention on a daily basis is that I think we have a hard time as a country realizing that this is not some abstract number that has no meaning to the way we live our lives.

During my campaign for office in 1994, I campaigned on a theme of payroll taxes. Specifically, I would talk in various troops around my district about the fact that if I went into a store in Maine and bought a pack of cigarettes, I would pay three taxes. If I bought a can of beer, I would pay four taxes. And we call those taxes on beer and cigarettes sin taxes, because they are taxes designed to discourage our behavior, behavior that we consider adverse to our health.

Well, yet, then what do we say when, if I created a job and I pay or manage 9 different taxes in the State of Maine and a number close to that in other States across the country, and those 9 taxes on a job total almost 25 or 30 percent of the total cost of hiring an employee, then what do we call that? Does it become a sin today to create a job or

create economic opportunity for an individual?

I would suggest before this Chamber that there is a connection between an extremely high tax burden across the country, again 9 taxes and almost 25 percent of gross cost at the minimum wage, not at a high wage, not at some \$100,000 salary level, but at a lousy \$4.25 an hour. In fact, the minimum wage today really is an appropriate term to describe the problem that men and women have when they find a job. The real issue today is take-home pay, not minimum wage. When you look at the difference between the two, it is staggering.

Now, I mentioned yesterday that I have been criticized by a columnist in a local paper back in my district that this was a waste of time.

Specifically, this editor had objected to the fact that I was faxing the debt total out to him and other editors throughout my district on a daily basis. In fact, he criticized me and he said, "Congressman LONGLEY should consider his own contribution to the national debt by his wasting of our tax dollars on faxes such as this, which cost paper, employee time, computer time, et cetera."

The editor went on to say, "I intend to let him know that we do not need to see a new fax each day or ever again. Thank you."

Now, the irony is that these several paragraphs were maybe less than 20 percent of a column describing the need of the local community to look ahead in planning the use of their downtown.

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I point that out, and in some sense this is humorous but there is also a very serious point that needs to be made and this is fundamentally the problem that we must confront as a Congress and we must confront as a country, is that Washington has become so remote from day-to-day life in America, from what goes on in our town halls, and in our State governments, that we have ceased to realize that the debt is actually a tangible factor that affects the way we live our lives, and when the editor of a prominent local paper suggests, when talking about downtown improvements, that the city cannot afford to just keep chugging along not particularly worried about the future, it would not hurt to think again.

Again, this is the ultimate issue. This debt not only is a monument to an incredible level of spending but it represents the fact that Washington has gone beyond a high level of taxes, it has gone beyond a high level of spending, and it has actually spent far more than it has taken in and it is now threatening to leave a \$5 trillion stone around the necks of our children and our grandchildren and the future of this country.

In my opinion, with all due respect to this editor, there is no issue more im-

portant than once and for all coming to grips with this national tragedy.

SUPPORT VOICED FOR PRESIDENTIAL VETO OF RECONCILIATION BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I seek this time today to voice my support for the President's veto of the reconciliation measure that was returned to the House with a long message yesterday that was read into the RECORD.

In that message, of course, the President touched on, I think, the elemental points of equity, of fairness, of the Congress' responsibility to try to achieve laws that in fact provide for the needs of the people that we represent. That in doing so in terms of attempting to achieve a balance in the budget that we also balance the responsibilities and the sacrifices that are expected in a fair way to provide for our success as a Nation today and into the future.

In fact, of course, today as we look at the economy and the progress that has been made in this administration, it is, I think, encouraging, that since 1993 there are 6 million new jobs that have been created, the deficit on an annual basis is on a glidepath, that does not mean that we can stop in terms of our work, that in fact we must continue to deal with attempting to achieve savings.

There are, of course, today 150,000 fewer Federal employees than there were when the President took office. So we are making some success.

But the President pointed out in that deficit message specifically the type of inordinate cuts that are being proposed in Medicare. The President, of course, has been foremost in his responsibility and advocacy for health care reform. In fact I think the first 2 years one of the major shortcomings that occurred was the future, of course, of a health care reform proposal, an effort to rationalize the system.

Today I think the President, too, would not argue that his plan was the only plan in terms of health care reform but that it was necessary to rationalize that system to bring these costs into control and the services in a way that would inure to the benefit of the people that we represent.

So that similarly when the President points out the types of cuts in Medicare, I think he does it, in a sense, standing on the high ground because of the work that he has done. Similarly the significant cuts in Medicare. In fact, half the cuts in the budget proposed by this new Congress, this Republican Congress, have been in the area of Medicare and Medicaid cuts.

Furthermore, of course, the President indicated his opposition and concern to many other elements in terms of the welfare reform.